



Annual Report FY 2017

# Judicial Council of Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts





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The Judicial Council of Georgia was created in 1945 to develop policies for administering and improving Georgia courts. Judicial Council members and committees meet throughout the year to address specific aspects of court administration and improvement.

The Judicial Council is made up of 27 members who represent every class of court, plus the President of the State Bar of Georgia, who serves as a non-voting member.

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) was created in 1973. As staff to the Judicial Council, the AOC provides subject-matter expertise on policy, court innovation, legislation, and court administration to all Georgia courts. Published by the Judicial Council of Georgia and the Administrative Office of the Courts in compliance with O.C.G.A. § 15-5-24 and by Order of the Supreme Court of Georgia dated June 12, 1978.

Director, Cynthia H. Clanton  
Chair, Chief Justice P. Harris Hines  
Judicial Council of Georgia  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
244 Washington Street SW  
Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
[www.georgiacourts.gov](http://www.georgiacourts.gov)



## State of the Judiciary

Speaking to a joint session of the Georgia General Assembly, Chief Justice P. Harris Hines delivered his first State of the Judiciary address on January 25, 2017.

*"Forty years ago, at the invitation of then House Speaker Tom Murphy, Chief Justice H.E. Nichols stood most likely where I stand today and for the first time reported to a joint session of the General Assembly on the State of Georgia's Judiciary. But Georgia is a much different state than when Chief Justice Nichols stood here, and Georgia's judiciary must keep up with a growing population, growing caseloads, and growing technological advances."*

Chief Justice P. Harris Hines  
Judicial Council Chair

Many of the Chief's remarks highlighted the great changes that have come to Georgia in 2017:

### Historic Changes for the Judicial Branch

Since 1945, the number of justices on the Supreme Court has been seven. The GA Legislature funded two additional justices, which allowed the Supreme Court bench to grow to nine Supreme Court Justices in 2017.

Justice Michael P. Boggs was appointed upon the retirement of Justice Hugh P. Thompson; Justice Nels S.D. Peterson and Justice Britt Grant were appointed on January 1, 2017 with the expansion of the Supreme Court.

The Court of Appeals has also changed, from **twelve** to **fifteen** judges.

The three **newest** judges in 2017 are: Judge Clyde Reese, Judge Charlie Bethel, and Judge Tripp Self.



### Ongoing Criminal Justice Reform

Georgia's ongoing criminal justice reform reflects the impact that can occur when all three branches of government work together. Other states now look to emulate this effort.

Georgia has enacted policies that hold criminal offenders accountable, improve public safety, and save taxpayer dollars.

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accountability courts, including drug courts, mental health courts, DUI courts, and veteran courts, exist across Georgia today.

### Improving Georgia's Court System

Georgia courts prioritized assisting people who simply cannot afford legal representation.

The growing use of technology, innovative self-help clinics, and kiosks have helped people fill out legal forms and petitions.

Georgia supports working toward hiring full-time juvenile court judges who serve on the front lines of crime prevention.

Georgia courts are continuously working to identify changes needed to guarantee citizens a timely resolution of their cases while meeting constitutional requirements of due process.

800,000 

civil cases involving self-represented litigants were heard by Georgia courts last year.



### Using Technology

Technology enables courts to become more accessible and efficient along with serving those in the harshest economic circumstances. Courts have made strides in moving from using paper documents to electronic filing of court documents and records.

[www.georgiacourts.gov](http://www.georgiacourts.gov)



## Statement of the Judicial Council/AOC Director

On behalf of the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) of Georgia, I am pleased to present the 44th annual report on our accomplishments during FY 2017. The AOC exists to serve the Judicial Council of Georgia, and that service is broad. Our charge from the Judicial Council's strategic plan is to improve justice in **all** Georgia courts, which we continue to do through collaboration, innovation, and information.

In the AOC, we have five divisions serving the Judicial Council: Financial Administration; Information Technology; Judicial Services; Communications, Children, Families, and the Courts; and the Director's Division. We create this annual report to take stock of our work for the fiscal year from July 2016 through June 2017. This past year, the AOC has staffed five Judicial Council meetings, multiple planning meetings, and 29 Judicial Council committee meetings.

Work within the committees this year includes: supporting the Criminal Justice E-filing Initiative with a number of Executive Branch agencies; the Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP) in partnership with the Department of Revenue to obtain court fines from income tax returns; staffing the National Center Workload Project with the Superior and State Court Judges; enlisting Senior Judge Jim Bodiford as the first ever Judicial Council Fellow to serve as a mentor and lead a Georgia team of judges (Judge Ben Studdard, Judge Jack Partain, and Judge Ann Harris) to assist the U.S. State Department in providing training on jury trials to judges in the Republic of Georgia; supporting the creation of a Misdemeanor Probation Bench Card; launching a new online child support calculator and expanding our e-filing services for child support; working with judges to hold two "Twitter Town Hall" meetings, on September 15, 2016 and May 9, 2017, to celebrate Constitution Day and Law Day; and much more.

This year marked an unusual amount of change for the Judicial Branch. As Chief Justice P. Harris Hines said in his State of the Judiciary address in January, we have more than 30 new superior court judges as well as many new judges in every class of court. January 2017 also brought three new justices onto the Supreme Court of Georgia, which has expanded from seven to nine justices. January allowed us to witness the investiture of Chief Justice Hines and Presiding Justice Harold Melton, who also serve as Chair and Vice Chair of the Judicial Council. After the swearing in, Chief Justice Hines spoke about the love and support from his family, and he serenaded his wife Helen from the podium with a spoken word version of Rod Stewart's song, "You're in My Heart." A video of the swearing in may be seen on the JC/AOC website at [www.georgiacourts.gov](http://www.georgiacourts.gov).

I officially became the Director in December 2015, and I've learned it is essential for a leader to surround herself with really smart and focused people. One should make sure that "the people we try to lead are better than we are." This is certainly true within the AOC. It is truly a privilege to work with my staff to serve the judges and citizens of Georgia with the goal of improving justice.

Cynthia H. Clanton





# Judicial Council of Georgia

## Chief Justice P. Harris Hines

Chair  
Supreme Court of Georgia

## Presiding Justice Harold D. Melton

Vice Chair  
Supreme Court of Georgia

## Chief Judge Stephen Louis A. Dillard

Court of Appeals

## Vice Chief Judge

### Christopher J. McFadden

Court of Appeals

## Chief Judge Kathy S. Palmer

Council of Superior Court Judges

## Judge Stephen D. Kelley

Council of Superior Court Judges

## Chief Judge H. Gregory Fowler

Council of State Court Judges

## Judge Nancy N. Bills

Council of State Court Judges

## Judge James R. Whitfield

Council of Juvenile Court Judges

## Judge Philip B. Spivey

Council of Juvenile Court Judges

## Judge Rooney Bowen III

Council of Probate Court Judges

## Judge Sarah S. Harris

Council of Probate Court Judges

## Chief Judge James M. Griner, Jr.

Council of Magistrate Court Judges

## Chief Judge Glenda Dowling

Council of Magistrate Court Judges

## Judge LaTisha Dear Jackson

Council of Municipal Court Judges

## Judge Matthew M. McCord

Council of Municipal Court Judges

## Mr. Brian D. "Buck" Rogers

President, State Bar of Georgia  
Ex Officio

## Chief Judge Stephen G. Scarlett

First District

## Judge Stephen S. Goss

Second District

## Judge Arthur Lee Smith III

Third District

## Chief Judge

### Courtney Lynn Johnson

Fourth District

## Chief Judge Gail S. Tusan

Fifth District

## Judge Brian J. Amero

Sixth District

## Judge Jack O. Partain III

Seventh District

## Chief Judge Donald W. Gillis

Eighth District

## Judge Bonnie Chessher Oliver

Ninth District

## Chief Judge Carl C. Brown, Jr.

Tenth District





# Strategic Plan

In October of 2016, the Judicial Council adopted a new strategic plan for FY 2017 through FY 2019. This plan continues the vision, mission, guiding principles, and strategic objectives of the prior strategic plan.

## Vision

To improve justice in all Georgia courts through collaboration, innovation, and information

## Mission

The Judicial Council and AOC lead collaboration on policy across Georgia's courts to improve the administration of justice in Georgia.

## Guiding Principles

**Uphold** the independence and integrity of the judiciary

**Promote** efficient and effective administration of justice

**Support** informed, fact-based decisions that affect the courts

**Collaborate** with key stakeholders in Judicial, Executive, and Legislative branches

## Key Initiatives

1. Promote public accessibility and transparency in the courts
2. Promote the use of technology as an effective communication tool
3. Encourage ongoing use of CourTools measures to promote access and fairness in courts
4. Encourage ongoing Executive and Legislative Branch communications and initiatives of mutual interest
5. Modernize court information collection and workload assessment to accurately reflect the work of the courts
6. Promote effective multi-disciplinary judicial education practices across multiple councils and groups
7. Enhance the professional and ethical image of the judiciary in the community
8. Monitor and share trends and best practices of interest to the judiciary
9. Assist the judiciary in business continuity and leadership succession planning

## Strategic Objectives



Improve Citizen Experience With Georgia Courts



Improve Collaboration and Planning



Build Thought Leadership



Judicial Council/AOC Strategic Planning Meeting, July 2016

To see the latest progress, go to [www.georgiacourts.gov](http://www.georgiacourts.gov).



## Judicial Council Actions

The Judicial Council convened five times in 2017 to consider action items and to review or listen to reports from the Access, Fairness, Public Trust and Confidence Committee; the Budget Committee; the Committee on Court Reporting Matters; Committee on Grants; the Judicial Workload Assessment Committee; the Policy and Legislative Committee; the Strategic Plan Committee; the Committee on Technology; the Committee on Records Retention and the Committee on Process Servers.

**December 9, 2016** was Chief Justice Thompson's last meeting as Chair of the Judicial Council.  
**February 24, 2017** was Chief Justice Hines' first meeting as Chair.

**This year, the Judicial Council came together to:**



**Recommend** an additional superior court judgeship for the Northeastern Judicial Circuit



**Review** and **approve** amended FY 2017 and FY 2018 budget requests

**Adopt** a strategic plan for FY 2017 to FY 2019



**Approve** an amendment to Rule 2.3(A) of Judicial Council Policies and Fees for Court Reporting Services in Criminal Cases



**Hear** and **vote** on items reported by the Policy and Legislative Committee, which recommended positions of support for several items of legislation. Informational reports are also provided by this committee throughout the year.

## FY 2017 Year in Review

### Legislative Session

This year, the Judicial Council successfully supported legislation which passed, notably:

**SB 132:** Authorized the Judicial Council to create and maintain civil and domestic filing forms, with final approval by the Supreme Court.

**HB 370:** Supported the Council of Municipal Court Judges' request for authorization to create a savings plan for its members.

### Budget

\$130,925,792 was appropriated to the **entire** Judicial Branch for FY 2018 during the 2017 legislative session. This accounts for less than 1% of the budget for the State of Georgia.

Enhanced funding was received for the Court Process Reporting System, the Council of Accountability Court Judges, the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education, and the Judicial Qualifications Commission. Funding supported certification and peer review programs, education and training, and additional staff support. Adjustments were received for statewide changes, judicial retirement needs, and other administrative changes unique to the Judicial Council.

The amended FY 2017 budget included a reduction of funds to reflect savings in personal services and align budget expenditures and adjustments listed above.



# Judicial Council Budget

The total FY 2017 budget for the Judicial Council totaled **14,728,939**.

## Amended FY 2017 Budget: Enhancements to Funding



## FY 2018 Budget Enhancements



## Adjustments



\*per JC/AOC request



# Judicial Council/AOC


The Judicial Council/AOC provides subject-matter expertise on policy, court innovation, legislation, and court administration to all classes of courts. The agency also offers a full range of information technology, budget, and financial services to the Judicial Branch.

## Director's Division

The Director's Division includes the Office of the General Counsel, Office of Governmental and Trial Court Liaison, and Human Resources.

In FY 2017, the AOC:

### Drafted 553 documents

 **230**  
letters prepared by HR to include offer letters, regret letters, and other benefit correspondence

 **269**  
letters

 **25**  
agendas

 **25**  
sets of Minutes

 **4**  
JC member guides

### Staffed 29 meetings

 meetings

 **2**  
days on the bench

 **2**  
panels


 **1**  
legislative reception

 **2**  
Twitter Town Halls

### Human Resource Services

 **113**  
AOC policies and procedures were updated and reviewed

 **65**  
external judiciary job vacancies were posted

 **13**  
staff meetings and informational sessions were held

 **3**  
employee discrimination trainings

### Talent Acquisition Services

 **6**  
GA judicial agencies/entities

 **5**  
positions

### General Counsel Successes

**140** contracts were drafted and executed.

**Developed** internal grant compliance officer expertise.

**\$2.4 million** in grant funds were appropriated to eight non-profits by the Civil Legal Assistance Project.

### The grant funds assisted with:

Providing more than **6,300** families with civil legal services

Safeguarding **2,400** children

Obtaining nearly **3,500** temporary protective orders

Providing **680** clients with housing assistance



## Governmental and Trial Court Liaison

In FY 2017, the Governmental and Trial Court Liaison (GTCL) provided services to trial court councils, collaborated with Judicial Branch stakeholders, and supported the Judicial Council in its strategic goals and mission.

### Liaison Function

Staff provided policy, technical, and/or administrative support to the Council of Municipal Court Judges, the Municipal Courts Training Council, the Council of Municipal Court Clerks, the Magistrate Courts Training Council, and the Council of Magistrate Court Clerks. Working in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education, staff continued to support the annual certification processes for the training councils. Liaison staff also began the development of a Felony Probation Bench Card for judges, in partnership with Justice Michael P. Boggs.

### Legislative Function

Staff supported the Judicial Council Policy and Legislative Committee and the Judicial Council's legislative package. Staff conducted legislative tracking of all legislation affecting the judiciary, produced twice-weekly legislative reports, and facilitated weekly legislative teleconference updates with all council leadership and staff. Additionally, legislative staff worked to successfully pass the Judicial Council's Senate Bill 132 and worked closely with the Council of Municipal Court Judges on the passage of House Bill 370.



Staffed **5** Judicial Council meetings



Staffed **47** meetings



Presented at **13** conferences



Tracked **255** bills



Facilitated **34** communication reports and meetings by conference call

## Financial Administration Division

A total of **103** projects were maintained over FY 2017, including state, federal, and other funded programs. All programs are continuously monitored for budgetary compliance and available for the annual independent inspection and audit.

In 2017, the Tax Refund Intercept Program became a permanent program, serving as the clearinghouse to aggregate intercept requests for unpaid court fines and fees and managing transactions with the Department of Revenue. More than \$100,000 was collected on behalf of 19 courts, with these additional dollars paid to courts with tax refund intercept notices. The Judicial Council/AOC will continue to expand the program to interested courts.

**The Financial Administration Division processes all financial transactions for seventeen judicial agencies.**



The Financial Administration Division processed all financial transactions for 17 judicial agencies during FY 2017.



# Communications, Children, Families, and the Courts Division

## Committee on Justice for Children (J4C)

To improve the process of civil child abuse and neglect cases, the Supreme Court of Georgia received a Court Improvement Grant in 1995. As a result, the Committee on Justice for Children was formed. It is currently chaired by Justice David E. Nahmias. The focus of the Committee is to administer federal grants and improve justice for children in dependency cases.

In January, a former juvenile court judge was hired to staff the J4C. Work continues on several existing projects including the Cold Case Project and the Court Process Reporting System, among other partnerships. A new Supreme Court order directing the work, mission, and members of the Committee will be issued in September 2017.

## Communications

Improving communications remains a priority under the Judicial Council Strategic Plan. Promoting the work of the Judicial Council improves justice by maintaining the public's trust and confidence in their state's judiciary.

Communications includes writing and publishing the annual report; publishing the *Georgia Courts Journal*; distributing press releases; updating social media, and maintaining the *Courts Directory*. This year, the primary focus has been to create content with videos and images. We've profiled and livestreamed multiple events of judges participating in panels, speeches, and projects to improve justice: "Reflections on Ferguson," "Day on the Bench in the South Georgia Circuit," and "Fairy Tale Trial" in the Bell Forsyth Judicial Circuit. As a result, we've been able to steadily grow our social media following.

The Communications, Children, Families, and the Courts Division serves as a hub for all communications and provides staffing services for select committees and commissions.

## Child Support

The Georgia Child Support Project is a collaborative effort between the Judicial Council/AOC and the Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Services.

The primary duty of the project is to staff the Georgia Commission on Child Support, which is chaired by Judge R. Michael Key. The Commission is engaged in several projects to improve collaboration, planning, and citizen experience in Georgia courts, along with building thought leadership.

## Child Support Commission Initiatives for FY 2017

The Commission approved and developed a new online child support calculator which makes calculating child support more intuitive and allows for the phasing out of Excel-based calculators.

The staff conducts ongoing training regarding use of the calculator and respond to inquiries on a daily basis. They also take part in ongoing collaborative work with the Division of Child Support Services. This work includes training, e-filing with the IT division, and supporting the DCSS Parental Accountability Courts (PAC).

The AOC developed a database using collected data to provide statistical evidence of the efficacy of these courts.

The Child Support Commission provides training to attorneys, judges, and mediators throughout the state, conducts research pertaining to child support, and sponsors legislation.



## Access, Fairness, Public Trust, and Confidence Committee (AFPTCC)

Contract Attorney Karlise Grier continued her service to this Committee, which is co-chaired by Justice Carol W. Hunstein and Justice Robert Benham. Justice Britt Grant and Justice Michael P. Boggs have become liaisons to this Committee.

### During FY 2017:

**Four** committee meetings were held.

**The Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Handbook** for the Georgia courts was completed and distributed through relevant partnerships.

A summit on **Human Trafficking and the Courts** was held with support from a State Justice Institute grant.

An educational event entitled **"Georgia Reflections on Ferguson: The Role of the Courts"** was held in December of 2016.



## Information Technology Division

The Information Technology Division has made updates and transitions during FY 2017 to improve the quality and stability of services provided to Georgia's judicial stakeholders.

### Currently our network has:

**128** server environment (hosts) with **1,124** monitored services


**99.89% uptime, on average**

### The help desk has:






**1,714** support calls logged

**1,659** closed/resolved issues

### The five core services to the JC/AOC staff are:

-  Email
-  Network infrastructure (including security)
-  Applications (development, versioning, maintenance, and reporting)
-  File/folder access
-  Mobility/remote access

### The five core services for judges, clerks, and court administrators are:

-  Case management
-  Data exchange
-  Reporting
-  Consulting
-  Training

### The Information Technology Division is guided by the Judicial Council's Committee on Technology.

The Information Technology division was involved in 12 project initiatives throughout FY 2017, in addition to a range of technological services to the courts, including software, data backups, resiliency, and mobile access security. The IT division provides installation, training, and support for standards-compliant software to courts and ancillary judicial agencies across Georgia at reduced and no-cost options. It leverages the cost advantages of a larger user base by partnering with any of the classes of court across 159 counties and hundreds of municipalities. It supports justice partners in their constitutional mandate for the provision of effective, efficient and timely access to the courts by all their citizens. By providing case management systems, it enables justice partners in small courts access to technological resources otherwise only available to larger jurisdictions while maintaining local discretion.

### Notable projects included:

#### Criminal Justice E-Filing Project (CJEP) With the Executive Branch

The Technical Workgroup is comprised of IT representatives from GBI, GTA, DCS, GPDC, DOC, AOC, and PAC. The workgroup supports defining standards, evaluating technical implementations, and providing recommendations regarding the deployment of the CJEP.

#### Infrastructure Updates for Capacity and Security

The Infrastructure Team is preparing for additional capacity demands as required.

### At the moment, we now support:

**Intranet** with hundreds of external customers

**Hardware** installation for e-courts, with

**300+** users already identified

**Supporting** development of single sign-on portal

**Accountability Courts Web service** via the JC Tech Committee

**Caseload** updates



# Judicial Services Division

Through its two sections, the Judicial Services Division provides data-driven analysis of the state’s trial courts and oversees the policy and regulatory matters of Georgia’s court professionals.

## Research and Data Analysis

The Office of Research and Data Analysis provides valuable insight to Georgia’s Judicial Branch with thorough, data-driven analysis.

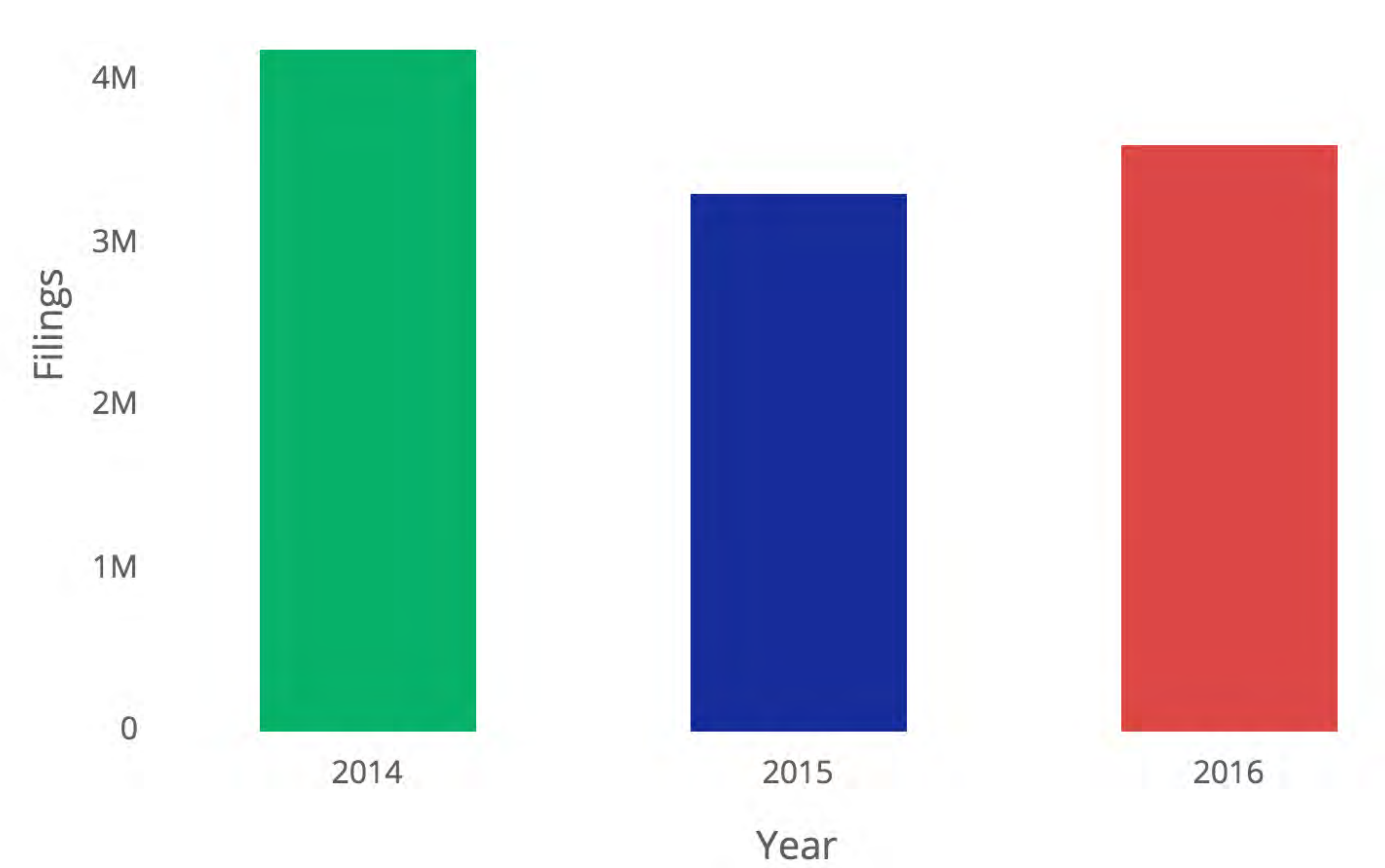
### Record Reporting in all Classes of Court

Caseload data from 1,000+ courts are collected annually by the AOC. FY 2017 was a record reporting year for Georgia courts —particularly among the state’s municipal courts with a 16% increase in reporting rate. Additionally, the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, superior, state, juvenile, and magistrate courts submitted 100% of their caseload reports.

### New Probate Form

The Council of Probate Court Judges began efforts to improve case data collection in 2015. Developing a new caseload reporting form was a major milestone within the project. In CY 2016, this form was used to allow the probate courts to better align with national reporting standards and reflect the ongoing nature of probate cases. The change did not hinder reporting—97% of reports were filed.

## Probate Forms Filed From 2014–2016



### Council of Accountability Court Judges Full-Time Research Support

To consolidate resources and work efficiently, the Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ), Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), and the AOC partnered to deliver technical and research services to the council. The AOC’s Office of Research and Data Analysis now has a full-time research analyst, and the IT Division is hosting a new database to serve as the data repository for the information utilized for analysis.



## New Project: Superior and State Court Workload Assessments Underway

In January of 2017, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), Council of Superior Court Judges, and the Council of State Court Judges, along with the AOC, launched a collective effort called the Georgia Judicial Workload Assessment Project. The project simplifies Georgia's case categories, aligns the state's caseload reporting to NCSC standards, evaluates current caseload reporting methods, and allocates judicial resources. The project is set to conclude in October of 2018.

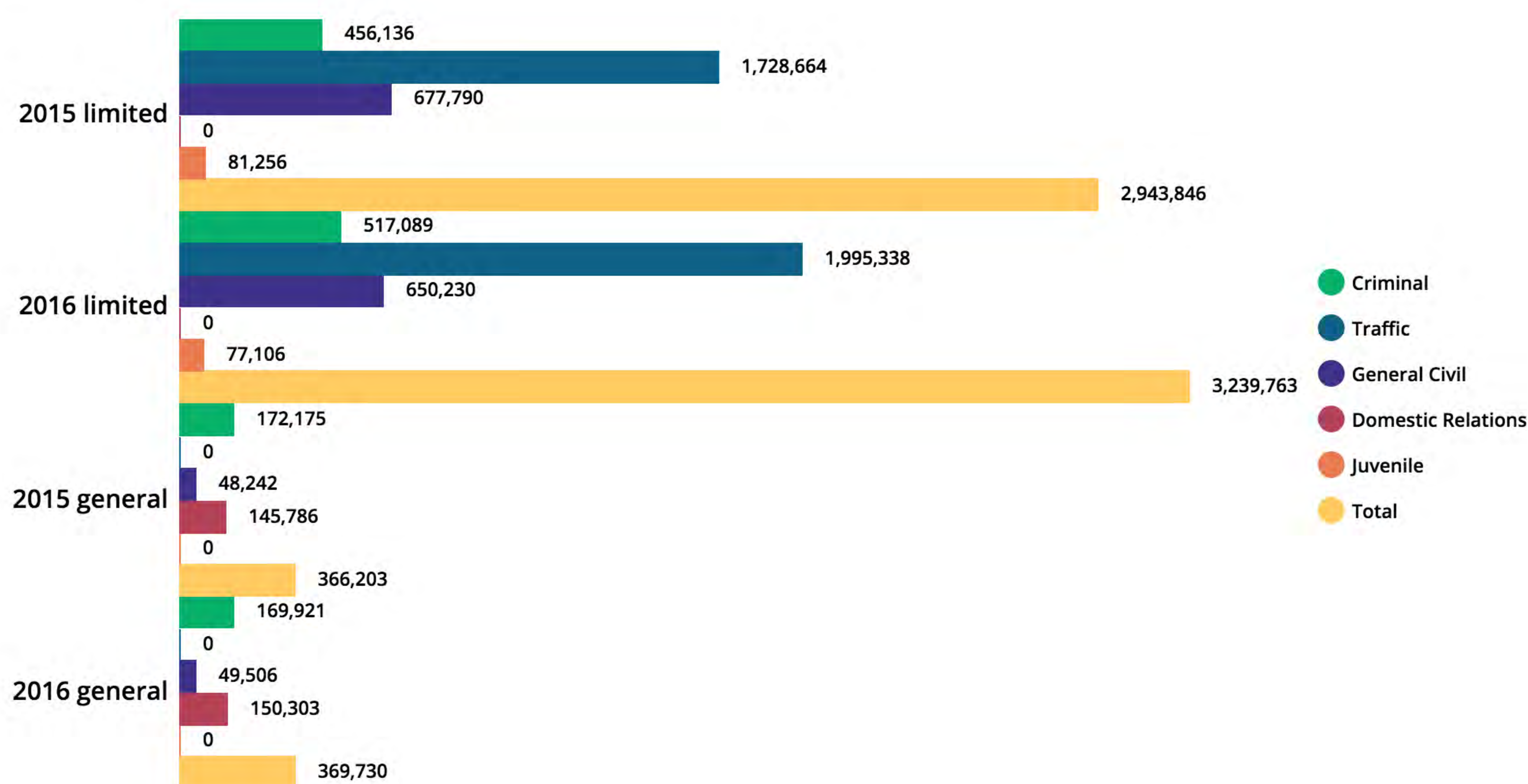
### Trial Court Caseload\*

In 2016, Georgia courts received over three million incoming cases. Of that, 89% of the filings were generated by the limited jurisdiction courts (state, juvenile, probate, magistrate, and municipal courts). The largest portion of cases filed in 2015 were traffic cases, which comprised 52% of the caseload. The municipal courts provided the largest number of incoming cases at 38% of the total caseload.

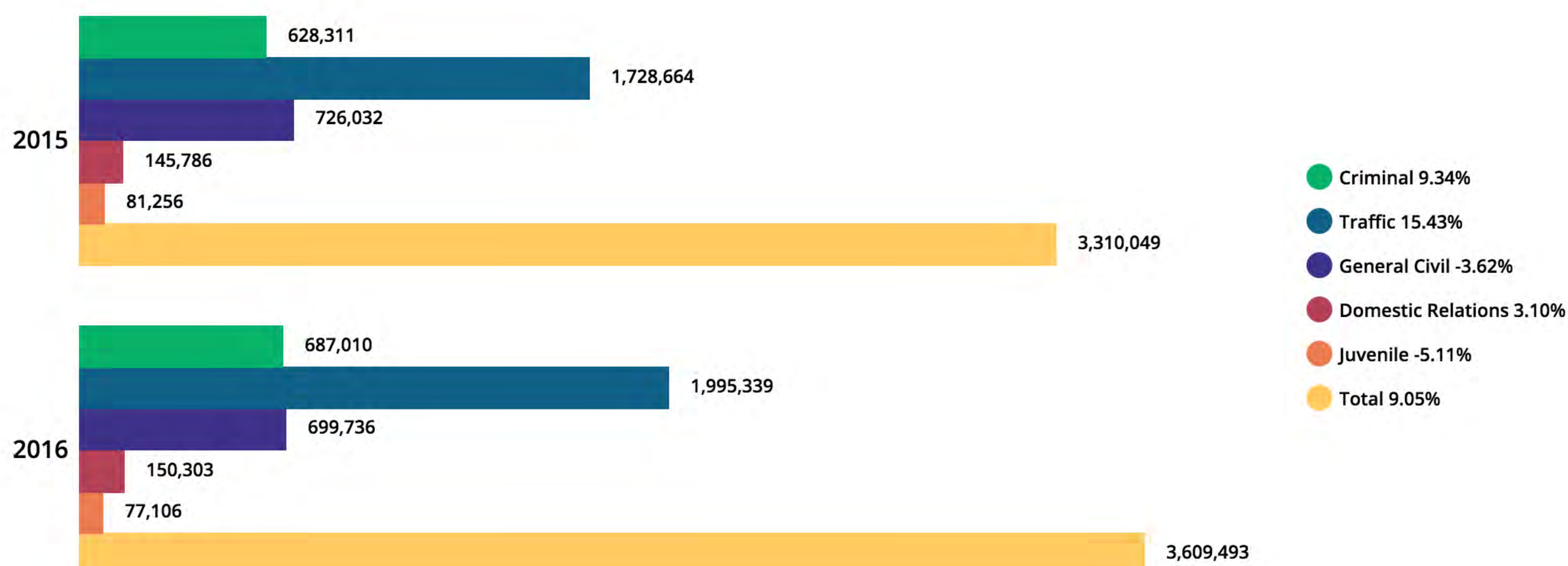
### CY 2015-2016 Georgia Caseload by Case Type

Limited: (State, Juvenile, Probate, Magistrate, Municipal)

General: (Superior)



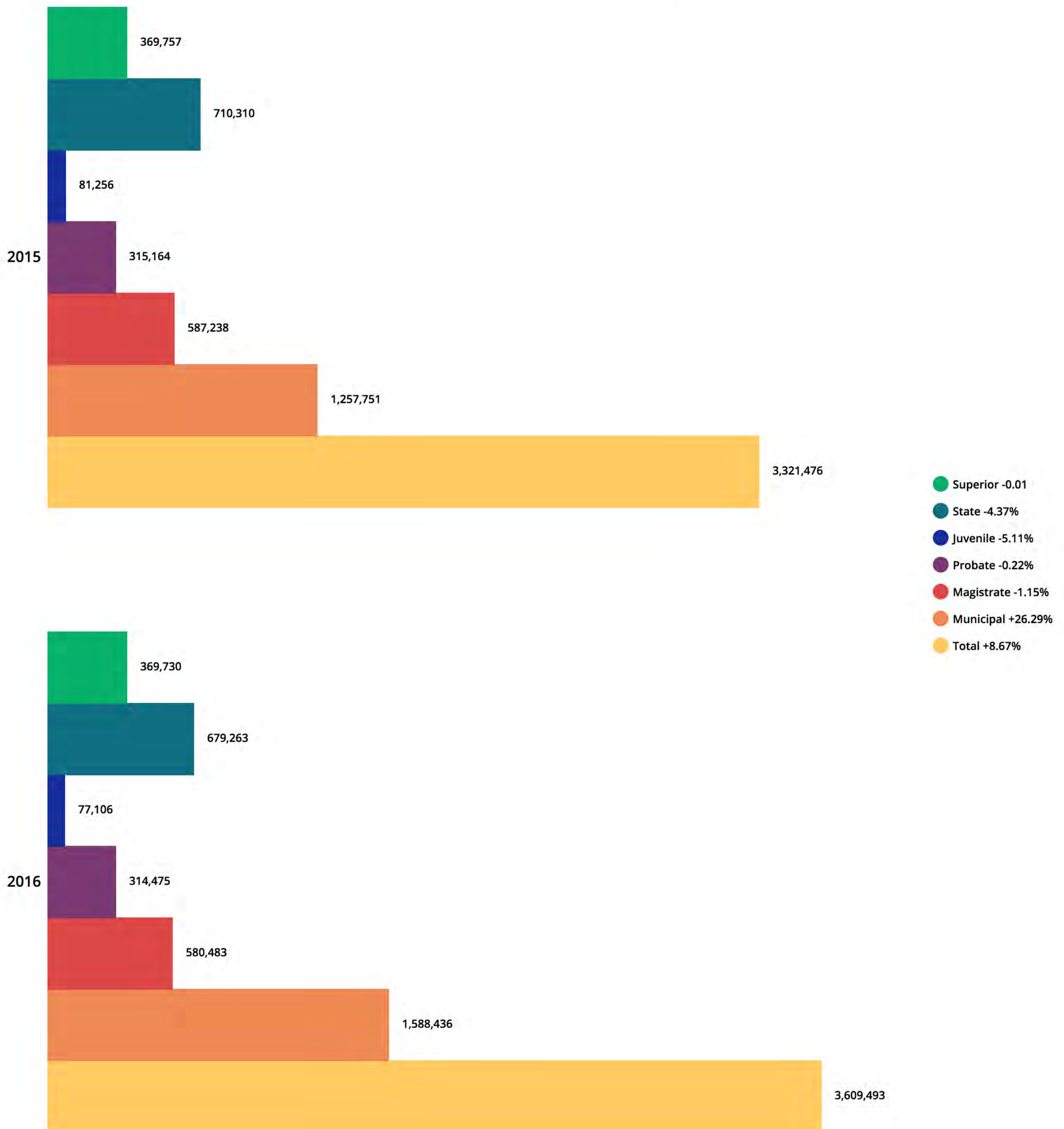
### CY 2015-2016 Totals and Percent Change by Case Type



\*Data are accurate as of the date retrieved and may not match previous or future publications due to additional reports and/or corrections to previous reporting. Only courts that have self-reported data are included in these figures. This report likely underestimates Georgia's total caseload. Reporting levels vary by class of court.



## CY 2016 Georgia Caseload Totals and Percentage Change by Court Class

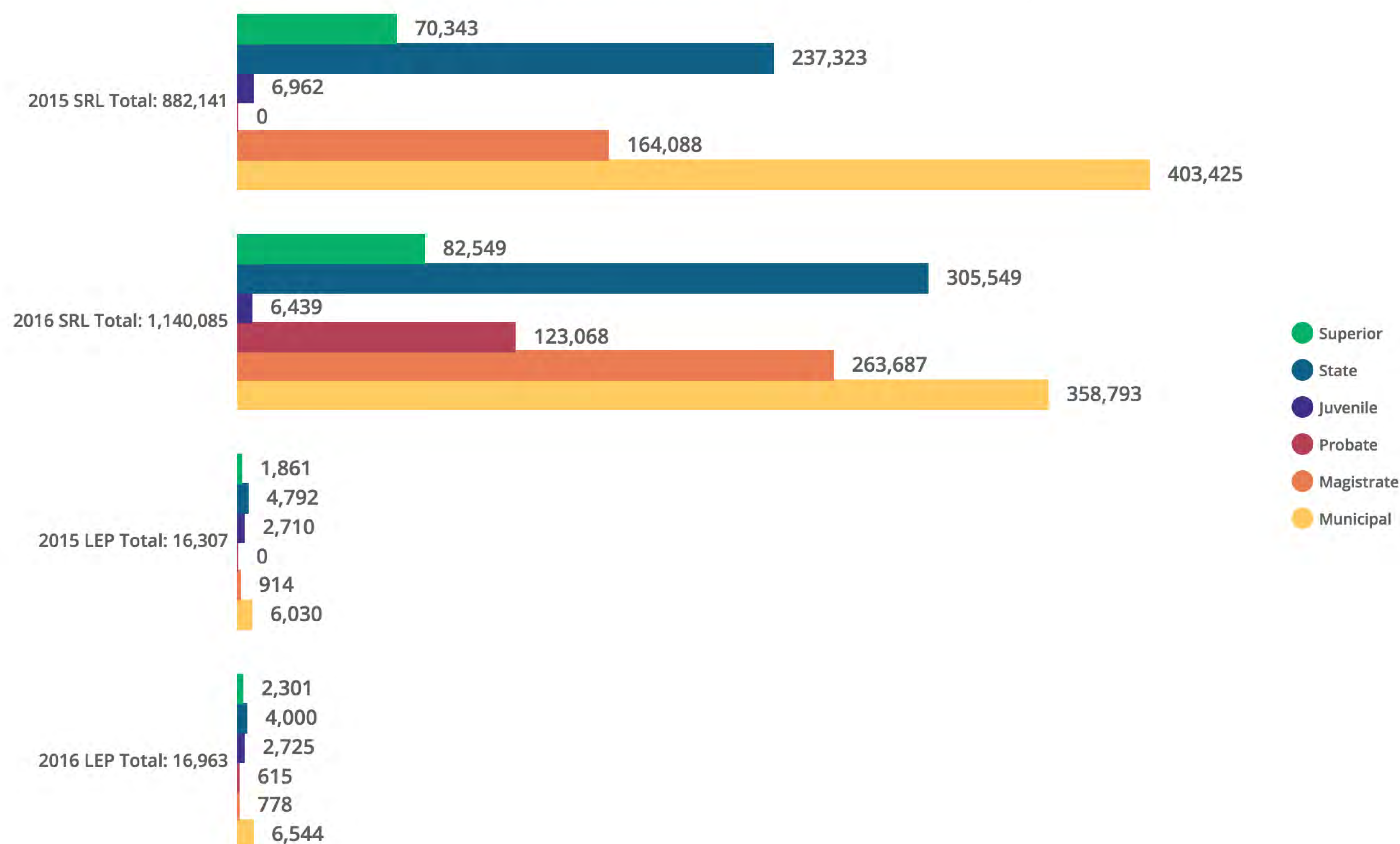




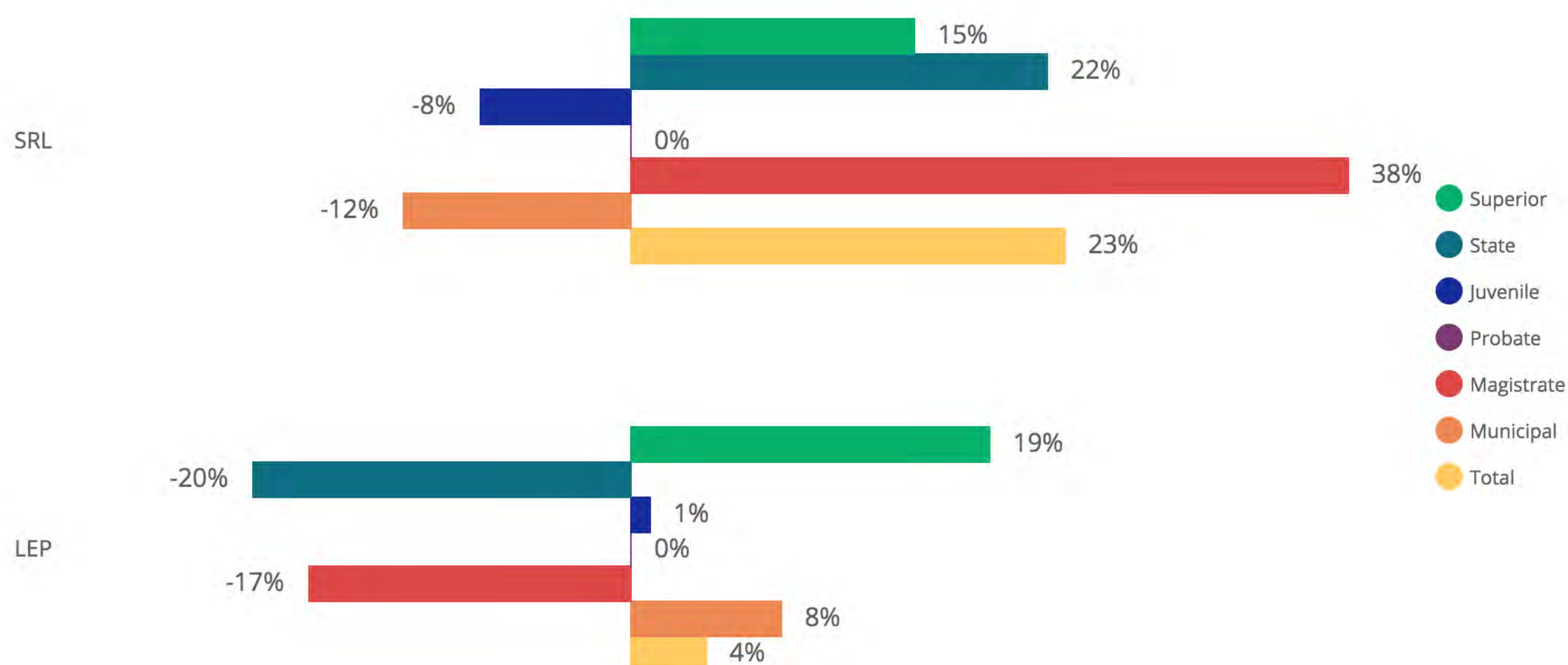
## 2015-2016 Georgia Case Characteristics

Over CY 2016, Georgia courts saw a rise in cases involving self-represented litigants and parties with limited English proficiency. In total, the courts heard 1,140,085 cases involving self-represented litigants and 16,963 cases involving persons with limited English proficiency. In both instances, the municipal courts provided the greatest number of cases for each category.

### Cases with Self-Represented Litigants (SRL) and Parties With Limited English Proficiency (LEP)



### 2015 - 2016 Georgia Case Characteristics Percent Change





## Judicial Demographics

Demographic information for Georgia's current judicial population is listed below.

### Supreme Court (9 Justices)

5 White Male  
2 White Female  
2 Black Male

### Juvenile Court (130 Judges)

69 White Male  
29 White Female  
8 Black Male  
7 Black Female  
1 Asian Male  
16 Unknown

### Court of Appeals (15 Justices)

8 White Male  
4 White Female  
1 Black Male  
1 Black Female  
1 Asian Female

### Probate Court (174 Judges)

72 White Male  
89 White Female  
4 Black Male  
9 Black Female

### Superior Court (212 Judges)

150 White Male  
31 White Female  
11 Black Female  
9 Black Male  
1 Asian Male  
10 Unknown

### Magistrate Court (515 Judges)

234 White Male  
158 White Female  
40 Black Male  
27 Black Female  
2 Asian Female  
2 Native American Male  
1 Native American Female  
1 Two or More Races Male  
50 Unknown

### State Court (129 Judges)

88 White Male  
24 White Female  
7 Black Male  
7 Black Female  
1 Asian Male  
1 Native American Male  
1 Unknown

### Municipal Court (343 Judges)

242 White Male  
30 White Female  
23 Black Male  
15 Black Female  
2 Asian Male  
1 Native American Male  
1 Two or More Races Female  
1 Two or More Races Male  
28 Unknown



## Office of Court Professionals

The Office of Court Professionals consists of two teams: the **Georgia Courts Registrar team**, tasked with processing court professionals' applications, testing, certification, and continuing education, and the **Policy and Regulatory team** assigned to staff judicial branch regulatory bodies, including the Supreme Court Commission on Interpreters, the Judicial Council's Board of Court Reporting, and the Georgia Certified Process Server Program.

The Georgia Courts Registrar team spent the year offering external training to various groups including municipal court judges and clerks, newly certified Georgia court reporters, and registered neutrals.

The registrar team assisted in new certification, registration, and licensure of:

**444** 

New Court Professionals

**385** 

Georgia Registered Neutrals

**50** 

Georgia Certified Court Reporters

**9** 

Georgia Licensed Interpreters

**This year, the Office of Court Professionals made strides in streamlining processes and procedures to make the courts more accessible. For example:**



### A single sign-on login system

Implemented by the Georgia Courts Registrar System, this allows court professionals, regardless of what role they play (interpreter, neutral, court reporter, or judge) to use one login for the registrar system. Staff has been traveling to conferences to help people with the new registration system.



### ID cards and certification

In response to demand, court professionals can request a plastic ID card reflecting their certification, for a small fee.



### In-house tracking of court reporting

Tracking of court reporting and continuing education is now managed in-house with positive customer satisfaction feedback for services received.



## Commission on Dispute Resolution

Currently, there are 45 programs in Georgia offering ADR services to 93 of the 159 counties. As of June 30, 2017, there were 2,200 registered neutrals in Georgia.

The Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution is a policy-making body appointed by the Supreme Court of Georgia, charged with the following duties:

**Administering** a statewide comprehensive Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program

**Overseeing** the development and ensuring the quality of all court programs

**Approving** court programs

**Developing** guidelines for court ADR programs

**Developing** criteria for training and qualifications of neutrals

**Establishing** and **enforcing** standards of conduct for neutrals

The Commission, supported by the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution, has created a statewide plan for ADR in Georgia. This enables any superior, state, juvenile, probate, or magistrate court in Georgia to offer litigants alternatives to traditional litigation. Those alternatives—mediation, non-binding arbitration, and case evaluation—give litigants lower-cost choices for resolving their differences compared to going to trial, helping conserve scarce court resources for high-conflict cases.

To conduct an ADR session in a court program, neutrals must be registered in the appropriate category with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution. Categories for registration include general civil mediation, domestic relations mediation, specialized domestic violence mediation, arbitration, early neutral evaluation, juvenile dependency, and juvenile delinquency.



### Year Highlights

The Georgia Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution and the Dispute Resolution Section of the State Bar of Georgia awarded the 2016 Chief Justice Harold G. Clarke Award to Douglas Hurt Yarn, Professor, Georgia State University College of Law and Executive Director, Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of alternative dispute resolution in Georgia.

The 23rd Annual ADR Institute and 2016 Neutrals' Conference was held Friday, December 9, 2016, at the State Bar of Georgia. There were 228 attendees in total. New this year was the web streaming option.

The Commission on Dispute Resolution and Georgia Commission on Family Violence continue their collaborative work on mediation guidelines used by local ADR programs to screen domestic relations cases and other civil cases to determine if intimate partner violence/abuse (domestic violence) is a factor between the parties. The safety of victims of domestic violence is a Commission on Dispute Resolution priority and the current guidelines will be reviewed to ensure best practices are used based upon the latest research and practices in the fields of mediation and intimate partner violence/abuse.

The 2016 ADR Program Directors Conference was held November 30 to December 2, at Lake Lanier Island Resort. There were 22 program directors/coordinators present for the two-day retreat. The agenda featured structured presentations on data collection, mediating cases with domestic violence, and the online child support calculator. Facilitated discussions were also helpful in identifying areas where the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution could provide further support to existing court programs. Feedback was overwhelming positive and the next conference is scheduled for November 2017.





## The Georgia Magistrate Courts Training Council

The Georgia Magistrate Courts Training Council which was created by statute in 1983, consists of six members, and oversees the training and certification of Magistrate Judges. O.C.G.A. § 15-10-130, et seq. The Council, chaired by Chief Judge Mary Kathryn Moss (Magistrate Court of Chatham County), met six times in FY 2017:

**September 8, 2016** – via GoTo Meeting

**October 2, 2016** – during the biannual recertification training held in Savannah, GA

**December 15, 2016** – via GoTo Meeting

**March 9, 2017** – via GoTo Meeting

**April 23, 2017** – during the biannual recertification training held in Augusta, GA

**June 15, 2017** – via GoTo Meeting

The Council developed and approved the training curriculum for mandatory annual magistrate training, focusing on such topics as first appearances, bonds, social media, arrest warrants, mental health, probation, and JQC opinions. In addition, the Council created new training offerings including a boot camp for new chief magistrates and various webinars. The Council also administered a mentor program for new magistrates. The Council issued certification to magistrate court judges meeting the annual training requirement for CY 2016.

The Georgia Magistrate Courts Training Council submits this report pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 15-10-134(e).

## The Georgia Municipal Courts Training Council

Created pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 36-32-22, consists of six members and oversees the training and certification of municipal court judges and chief clerks. The Council, chaired by Chief Judge Margaret Washburn (Municipal Court of Sugar Hill), met five times in FY 2017:

**September 16, 2016** – Duluth, GA

**October 14, 2016** – Athens, GA

**January 20, 2017** – Athens, GA

**March 31, 2017** – Greensboro, GA

**June 20, 2017** – Savannah, GA

The Council developed and approved the training curriculum for mandatory annual municipal court judges training, focusing on such topics as Judicial Ethics; Collaborating with the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA); Fees, Fines, and Surcharges in the Adult Probation System; Caseloads: Trends and Reporting Requirements; Mental Health Indicators from a Clinical Standpoint; Legislative and Case Law Updates; Human Trafficking Indicators; a procedural Contempt Panel; and updates from the Department of Driver Services. A revamped New Judges Only track was also offered on the Fundamentals of Courtroom Management; Uniform Rules and Court Security; and Workplace Violence. The Council issued certification to municipal court judges meeting the annual training requirement for CY 2016 and reported delinquencies to the Judicial Qualifications Commission as prescribed by statute.

Additionally, per statutory requirement, the Council also oversaw the training and certification of chief municipal court clerks. The training curriculum for chief clerks focused on such topics as Caseload Reporting; retention schedules; the Open Records Act; ethics; Tolling Orders; Fines and Fees; Ferguson; Technology; and updates from the Department of Driver Services and the Georgia Crime Information Center. The Council issued certification to chief municipal court clerks meeting the annual training requirement for CY 2016. The Georgia Municipal Courts Training Council submits this report pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 36-32-24.



# Highlights for FY 2017





# Judicial Appointments and Elections

## Superior Court – Appointments

Judge William F. Sparks	10/06/16	Rome
Judge Don W. Thompson	11/03/16	Lookout
Judge Aaron B. Mason	01/01/17	Mountain
Judge Rebecca Ashley Wright	02/01/17	Clayton
Judge Cynthia C. Adams	02/13/17	Augusta
Judge Paige Reese Whitaker	02/27/17	Douglas
Judge David L. Mincey, III	02/27/17	Atlanta

## Superior Court – Elections January 1, 2017

Judge G. E. Bo Adams	Houston
Judge Scott L. Ballard	Griffin
Judge Jimmie H. Brown	Southwestern
Judge Kimberly A. Childs	Cobb
Judge Thomas A. Cox, Jr.	Atlanta
Judge Eric K. Dunaway	Atlanta
Judge Belinda E. Edwards	Atlanta
Judge Denise D. Fachini	Cordele
Judge Edward John Flythe	Augusta
Judge Judson L. Green, IV	Dublin
Judge Robert W. Guy, Jr.	Brunswick
Judge Thomas Brittan Hammond	Toombs
Judge Heather Hendricks Lanier	South Georgia
Judge Thomas David Lyles	Paulding
Judge Robert L. Mack, Jr.	Clayton
Judge Barry Scott Minter	Conasauga
Judge Michael T. Muldrew	Ogeechee
Judge Amanda S. Petty	Ocmulgee
Judge Shana M. Rooks	Clayton
Judge Andrew C. Spivey	Waycross
Judge Clayton A. Tomlinson	Alapaha

## State Court - Appointments

Judge Kathryn L. Powers	01/04/17	Liberty
Judge Jeffery N. Osteen	04/11/17	Clayton

## State Court – Elections January 1, 2017

Judge John G. Breakfield	Hall
Judge David A. Kendrick	Decatur
Judge Jane Pyron Manning	Cobb
Judge Kellie Kenner McIntyre	Richmond
Judge Joseph Luke Mitchell	Brooks
Judge John S. Morgan	Cobb
Judge Allison Barnes Salter	Cobb
Judge Josh W. Thacker	Spalding





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